

## **The Power of the Pencil:**

### Getting Writing on the Radar for Students With Deaf-Blindness and Other Significant Disabilities

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## **Agenda**

- An Overview of Typical Literacy Development
  - Emergent/Early Literacy & Conventional Literacy
- Write From the Start!
  - Alternative Pencils
  - Concepts and Strategies to Foster **Emergent** Writing
- Considerations for Writing with Letters & Other Vocabulary
- Informal Assessment Over Time

## **What is Emergent Literacy?**

Emergent literacy is  
"... the reading and writing behaviors that  
precede and develop into conventional  
literacy."

(Sulzby, 1991)

## **A Current of View of Literacy Development: Emergent Literacy**

(Teale & Sulzby, 1986, 1991)

- Emergent literacy begins at birth long before formal instruction.
- Children learn about literacy when they are actively engaged.
- Children learn about literacy through real life experiences & interactions.
- Emergent literacy behaviors are fleeting and variable depending on text, task, and environment.

## **Emergent Literacy Activities Are Immersed In...**

Lots of Talk

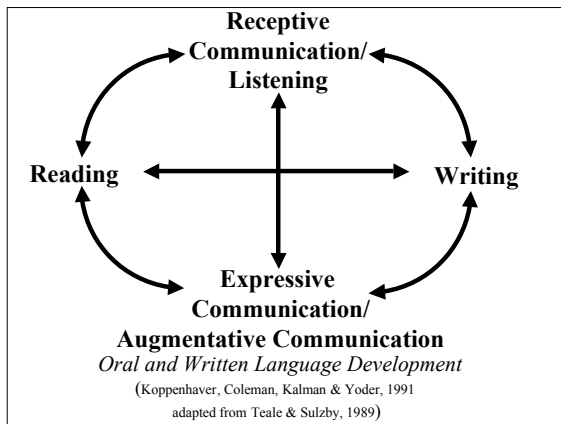
Lots of Social Interactions

Lots of Models---Lots of Print---Lots of FUN!

**Lots of Experimentation & Mistakes**

Lots of **HIGH EXPECTATIONS!!!!**

## **Emergent Literacy Experiences Support Students in Becoming Conventional Writers & Readers**



## AAC Literature Supports Giving Our Students Access to Emergent Literacy

- Bedrosian, (1997)
- Blischak, (1995)
- Hanser, (2006)
- Koppenhaver, Coleman, Kalman & Yoder, (1991)
- Koppenhaver & Erickson, (2003)
- Koppenhaver, Erickson, Harris, McLellan, Skotko & Newton, (2001)
- Light & Kelford Smith, (1993)
- Light, Binger & Kelford Smith, (1994)
- Miles, (2005) [www.dblink.org/lib/literacy.htm](http://www.dblink.org/lib/literacy.htm)
- Pierce & McWilliams, (1993)

## Emergent Writing

"Children begin reading by writing.  
People are natural message-makers; we  
want to leave our mark."

"Writing challenges students to think  
about print."

(International Reading Association & National Association for the  
Education of Young Children, 1998)

## Writing Starts With Making a Mark!

- Visit Your Closets: dust off those old walking toys & vibration toys!
- Walking toy accessories: velcro & marker
- Vibrating toy as a paintbrush
- Battery interrupter
- Switch
- Cookie sheet
- Switch Latch & Timer Box (Ablenet)

## Build Active Engagement: **WRITE From the START!**

*Writing With Alternative Pencils CD,  
Available from the Center for Literacy & Disability Studies  
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC*

- Color Coded Eye Gaze Frame
- Print Alphabet Flip Chart
- Braille Alphabet Flip Chart
- Tactual IntelliKeys Custom Overlay
- Braille IntelliKeys Custom Overlay
- Onscreen Keyboard

## Build Cognitive Clarity

What is this thing?

How does it work?

Who does this?

What are these marks?

What do they mean?

And **WHY** should I do this?

### Strategies to Support Clarity

- MODEL, MODEL, MODEL
  - Model the use of the student's pencil
  - Do think out louds
- Attribute meaning to every student action
  - Call attention to the text repeatedly
- Make links between writing and student experiences
- Make sure there are real reasons and real people to celebrate their writing

### Partner Assisted Scanning

- Helpful strategy for students who cannot easily reach out to make a choice
- Provides multiple opportunities for interactions & scaffolding
- Partner scans through choices for student
- Simply states/lists choices--does not ask a lot of questions
- Pauses between choices
- Student indicates a choice
  - No tech: gesture, vocalization, eye movement, expression
  - Light tech: single message device, listing device
- If no selection is made-list is repeated in same order
- Offer "none of these" as a choice
- Offer "finished" as a choice
- If no clear selection, attribute meaning to any move student makes
- Great Resource: Linda Burkhart [www.lburkhart.com](http://www.lburkhart.com)

### Allow For Errors: A Window in on Students' Understandings

(Bear & Templeton, 1998; Gentry, 1982; Gould, 2005; Henderson, 1981)

### Sample IEP Goals for Partner Assisted Scanning

- During writing with the full alphabet, student will independently activate a single message device programmed with "that's it," with <insert level of support>, X or more times, on 3 out of 5 days.
- During writing with the full alphabet, student will independently activate two single message devices with "that's it," and "not that one," with <insert level of support>, on X or more times, on 3 out of 5 days.

What Happens One Day...  
May Not Happen On the Next

"Consistently Inconsistent"  
(GH, 2007)

### Emergent Literacy Develops Through Meaningful Social Interactions

(Mandel-Morrow, 2001; Teale & Sulzby, 1991; Schickedanz & Casbergue, 2004)

## Be a "More Knowledgeable Other"

- Shows student how to construct meaning out of the print/braille
- Models the how, what and why
- Attributes meaning to all attempts
- Connects their life experiences with the abstract

## Reasons to Include the Entire Alphabet

- The ULTIMATE letter activity
- Need the opportunity to figure out that letters are linked to speech
- Understand what the alphabet is and that it is a finite group of letters...
- These letters are meant to be mixed around
- Supports visual, tactual & motor memory

\*Generative issue: All of life is not a multiple choice test. Can't always anticipate what they want to write or say.

## Students Learn About the Alphabet by Using the Alphabet

8/19/04

dkkkkkkkvvvvmeeyxxtttx

11/30/04

kkjirrkivmmmmvmrrintyyyvqntttt

1/10/05

bjmmgvvuuuvjjjxoxjboj.jwibgooddlmmmfet  
vppliimltyqqvnmfmmgghxvzzzgfaaaakjrbbvxhg  
medlx

## The Dilemma of How Emergent Writing Looks

- Emergent Engine Underneath the Hood
  - Typically developing kids: Good engine. Runs well. Learning to drive it.
  - Our kids: Bad engine. Poorly wired-doesn't always run. Struggling to drive it.
- Emergent Writing Opportunities
  - Typically developing kids: over a total of 1000 hours of print experiences (Heath, 1983)
  - Our kids: 100 hours? 50 hours 10 hours? None?
- Emergent Writing Characteristics
  - Typically developing kids: messy, doesn't look like anything, can't read it, doesn't make sense, inconsistent, changes from day to day-however gradually changes over time. HOW MUCH TIME?
  - Our kids: What is realistic given their lack of experiences?

## Opportunities to Write by Themselves-Just Because

## Time to WRITE: Small Group Activity

- How much energy did you spend on just physically using the pencil?
- What was the more knowledgeable other doing to help you?
- What other supports would have been helpful?
  - A model?
  - Better switches?
  - Quiet environment?
  - More time?
  - Something else to write about?

## Fostering the Motivation to Write

- Choice
- Personal connection/interest
- Variety
- Understanding of what to do
- Purpose: Something will happen because of their writing

Importance: Allows students to construct meanings about the alphabet: by connecting what they care about with the abstract

## In the Classrooms...

- Setup student with an EASY pencil.
- Schedule daily time for "free writing" (**NO COPYING**)
  - Anything goes; writing is not corrected.
  - Journaling, notes, letters
  - Signs, artwork, cards, name tags, place cards
  - Making books!
  - Voting Box with weekly questions
    - Example: Should we invite Mr. Janitor or Mr. Principal down for morning reading? Should we read the book about swimming this week?
- Topics can provide a reason and a context for interpreting writing:
  - Personal Remnant Books
  - Objects/Tactuals
  - Pictures
  - Classroom Remnant Lists/Charts
  - Pictures (internet, personal pics-slide show)
  - Verbal/Signed choices based on student interest

## Sample IEP Goal

Given daily opportunities to write about self-selected, personally meaningful topics using the appropriate assistive technologies, student will choose a topic from his home/school log, photo journal, or other source, with <insert level of support>, 4 out of 5 days.

## One Hit Wonders: Promoting Models and Interactions

*It's about building meaning: Talking about letters and connecting it to something they know helps give the letter meaning.*

- Alphabet Scavenger Hunt
- Wheel of Fortune (One h.s. teacher uses lunch menu!!!)
- Hangman
- Tongue Twisters
- Rhyming Words
- Word Wall Activity
- Group Alphabet Writing

## Write to Read: Making Tactual Step by Step Books

## Considerations for How Students GENERATE Writing

(From Write to Talk! Musselwhite & Hanser, 2005)

### **What allows for the most generativity or potential for generativity?**

- **The Alphabet**
- Core & Content Vocabulary
  - The commonly used words throughout the day
- **Closed, Activity Specific Vocabulary**
  - Who's idea is this anyway?

## Providing Access to Words

- Light Tech Flip Systems  
(Write to Talk! Musselwhite & Hanser, 2005)
- IntelliKeys Custom Overlays
- IntelliTalk Onscreen Word Banks
- Consider Use of AAC Devices as Pencils  
(Write to Talk! Musselwhite & Hanser, 2005)

## Tactual Symbol Set

(By Hanser, 2004, Adapted from Texas School of the Blind, Maryland School for the Blind and Goosens and Crain)

<u>Function</u>	<u>Shape</u>	<u>Texture</u>	<u>Color</u>
Pronouns	Octagon	Laminate	Orange
Verbs	Triangle	Felt	Pink
Adjectives	Heart	Bumpy	Blue
Nouns	Square	Smooth	Yellow

## Make Sure There Are Real Audiences for Students

- CELEBRATE!
- Re-read journal entries and talk about them
- Display writing by front office, hallway, room, refrigerator!!!
- Author's chair
- Student writing shared at assemblies
- School newspaper (Food Review, Movie Review, Book Corner, Student of the Month, Joke Corner, Gossip Column)
- Pen pals

## Errorless Writing Activities Who's Idea is This Anyway?

## Ongoing Assessment of Early Writing

*Look for changes in the following over time:*

- Interest/attention to others' modeling writing
- Ease with student selecting writing topic
- Preferences of particular letters
- Use of different letter patterns
- Use of punctuation
- Use of numbers
- Inclusion of letters from name or personally important things
- Use of spaces to reflect word-like groupings
- Relevance of writing to chosen topic
- Use of early sound or inventive spelling

## Sample IEP Goals

- Given daily opportunities to write about self-selected, personally meaningful topics using the appropriate assistive technologies, the student will demonstrate increased complexity in writing as indicated by changes in letter combinations and spaces, 2 out of 5 days.
- Given daily opportunities to write about self-selected, personally meaningful topics using the appropriate assistive technologies, the student will demonstrate increased complexity in writing as indicated by X or more word-like groupings, 2 out of 5 days.

**Top 5 Reasons to WRITE!**

5. Writing is an active way of learning about print.
4. Writing supports learning the reading process.
3. Writing allows students to record their thoughts and leave a mark.
2. Writing can be a concrete source for student assessment.
1. Writing is **COMMUNICATION**.

**"Where there was once an  
observer, let there now be a  
participant."**

*Eliot Eisner*